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Les travaux de Brookover suggèrent que l'amélioration de l'image de soi au plan scolaire a pour effet d'augmenter le désir de fréquentation scolaire chez l'élève. Partant de ce postulat, l'étude porte sur l'impact de l'enseignant sur les objectifs de fréquentation scolaire de l'élève; elle tient compte de la classe sociale de l'élève, de son quotient intellectuel et de son niveau de réussite scolaire. De nombreuses hypothèses sont formulées à partir des deux idées suivantes: 1. l'image de soi se développe en partie selon la façon dont on pense être évalué par les autres; 2. la stabilité de l'image de soi est liée à deux aspects de l'évaluation perçue, soit sa consistance et leur caractère positif ou négatif.

Les données proviennent de tous les élèves de huitième et de dixième année qui étaient en classe le jour de la passation du questionnaire dans 39 écoles. Ces écoles constituent un échantillon représentatif des aspects linguistique, religieux, économique et géographique du Québec. Les réponses de 6472 garçons et filles ont servi à évaluer les caractéristiques et perceptions des élèves; leurs enseignants ont aussi été questionnés.

On peut résumer les résultats ainsi: 1. plus l'élève perçoit favorablement la façon dont il est évalué par son enseignant, plus son image de soi est positive; 2. plus son image de soi est positive, plus son objectif de fréquentation scolaire est élevé; 3. plus l'élève perçoit favorablement la façon dont il est évalué par son enseignant, plus son objectif de fréquentation scolaire est élevé. Par ailleurs, chacune de ces variables semble reliée positivement et de façon significative à la classe sociale, au quotient intellectuel et à la réussite scolaire.

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DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE
DE LA PLANIFICATION

PERCEIVED TEACHER-EVALUATION
AND
THE LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ASPIRATION OF ADOLESCENTS

A RESEARCH REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

The Province of Quebec is in the midst of an educational revolution, one of the main purposes of which is to increase both the quality and the amount of education given to young citizens of the province. The reader is probably acutely aware that these aims have resulted in a large number of changes, both in systems of and in facilities for education.

The provision of better facilities is a first step in the improvement of education, and provincial authorities are to be commended for their fine accomplishments to date in this regard. Without these efforts, no real progress can be made. But there are many facets to each problem, and in the study in which you assisted, we were concerned with the question of how to increase the motivation of adolescents to take advantage of the new and improved facilities. If schools and colleges are provided for students who neither want to go to them, nor to work hard once they are there, they will not be as effective as they might otherwise be.

Much of what is known about motivation has come from the research of psychologists. Some of this research has been addressed to the improvement of motivation for immediate tasks; in this regard, the findings of Dr. B. F. Skinner (Harvard University) concerning the impact of positive reinforcements on the level of effort come to mind. Other psychologists have studied the development of general tendencies to strive, and Professor David McClelland's

(Harvard University) research on the relationship of early childhood experience to later levels of the need for achievement (n-Ach) is perhaps the best known of this work.

Sociologists have also studied motivation, and their concern has centered on the impact of forces in the social environment of the individual on his behaviour. One of the most recent published works in this field which bears on education is that of Professor W. Brookover (Michigan State University), which has shown that the higher the teacher evaluates the student's ability to do school work, the higher the academic self-concept of the student, even where the IQ is the same. The theory to explain this phenomenon is that the student obtains his self-image from what he believes that important other people think of him ("perceived evaluations of significant others"), and that if an individual believes himself to be "poor" in some attribute or skill, his self-expectations for high performance, and therefore his level of effort, will be low.

Although Brookover's main emphasis has been on the study of the impact of improved self-concept on improved academic performance, his work suggests that an improvement in the academic self-concept also results in a change in the level of educational aspiration -- in fact, that it increases motivation to attend school.

Our research follows in the tradition of Brookover's work. It replicates his findings that the teacher influences the student, and in addition, it identifies the social class, IQ, and academic achievement levels at which the student is most strongly influenced. While it is certainly true that adults other than teachers (notably

parents) influence the aspirations of adolescents, we chose to study the impact of teachers on their students' school plans, because we felt that they would be in a better position than parents to make practical use of findings resulting from research of this kind.

THE DATA

Data were gathered from all grade eight and grade ten students in attendance on the day of the administration of the questionnaires in 39 schools selected to represent all major national, religious, economic, and geographic groups and regions in the Province of Quebec. Responses by 6472 boys and girls were used to obtain the students' own estimates of certain of their characteristics and perceptions, and the teachers of these students were an independent source of information as well.

In the analysis of these data, where the predicted relationship was observed, and the chance probability of obtaining such a relationship was at the .05 level or lower, the relationship was interpreted as statistically significant, and supportive of the prediction. The chi square test was used to determine the level of probability.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

In brief, the main theoretical ideas bearing on the hypotheses of this study are as follows: the self-concept develops in part from the perceived evaluations of significant others; the stability of the self-concept is related to two aspects of the perceived evaluations,

first, whether they are consistent, and second, whether they are negative or positive. The combinations are as follows:

- (1) a stable positive self-concept resulting from perceived evaluations which are consistent and favourable;
- (2) a stable negative self-concept resulting from perceived evaluations which are consistent and unfavourable; this, however, is not as stable as the stable positive self-concept, since the individual is assumed to be more reluctant to change a positive self-evaluation than a negative one;
- (3) an unstable positive self-concept resulting from perceived evaluations which are mostly favourable, but not consistent -- i.e., with occasional negative perceived evaluations;
- (4) an unstable negative self-concept resulting from perceived evaluations which are mostly negative, but not consistent -- i.e., with occasional positive perceived evaluations; it is assumed that the unstable negative self-concept is more subject to change than the unstable positive self-concept, since the positive self-concept contributes to self-esteem, but the negative self-concept generally does not.

A simply typology based on these ideas is presented in Figure 1.

TYPOLGY OF SELF-CONCEPT

		Quality of Perceived Evaluations	
		Negative	Positive
Consistency of Perceived Evaluations	Consistent	Stable Negative Self-Concept A	Stable Positive Self-Concept B
	Inconsistent	Unstable Negative Self-Concept C	Unstable Positive Self-Concept D

Figure 1

We assume that individuals with a stable and positive self-concept (in cell B of the typology) will tend to defend it from change more than individuals in the other categories of the typology, and that they will therefore be less subject to the influence of significant others than the other three types.

We also assume that category B includes a higher proportion of students of high social class, high IQ, and high academic achievement than the other three categories. On the basis of these assumptions, as well as the findings of other researchers that positive perceived evaluations tend to elevate the self-concept and that negative perceived evaluations tend to depress it, we developed the following six hypotheses:

1. The lower the social-class level of the student, the more the perception of a negative teacher-evaluation of ability to do school work will tend to depress the academic self-concept of the student.
2. The lower the social-class level of the student, the more the perception of a positive teacher-evaluation of ability to do school work will tend to elevate the academic self-concept of the student.
3. The lower the IQ level of the student, the more the perception of a negative teacher-evaluation of ability to do school work will tend to depress the academic self-concept of the student.
4. The lower the IQ level of the student, the more the perception of a positive teacher-evaluation of ability to do school work will tend to elevate the academic self-concept of the student.
5. The lower the academic achievement level of the student, the more the perception of a negative teacher-evaluation of ability to do school work will tend to depress the academic self-concept of the student.

6. The lower the academic achievement level of the student, the more the perception of a positive teacher-evaluation of ability to do school work will tend to elevate the academic self-concept of the student.

The next six hypotheses we tested are based on the following assumptions: that decisions by individuals to act in certain ways are made (in part):

- (1) To conform with actions that are generally expected of members of the group to which the individual belongs.
- (2) To conform with the expectations of significant others, and,
- (3) To conform with one's own belief about personal ability to succeed (self-concept) in activities that result from those decisions.

We also assume that the lower the social class, IQ, and academic achievement of students, the less pressure they face for college attendance as a consequence of the expectations of significant others, and the less they feel that college attendance is expected of them because they are members of low social class, IQ, or academic achievement groups; therefore, the assumption is that the one remaining factor -- the academic self-concept -- has a greater impact on the college plans of students at low levels of social-class, intelligence, and academic achievement than on the plans of students at higher levels.

This reasoning led to the following six hypotheses:

1. The lower the social-class level of the student, the more low academic self-concept will tend to depress his level of educational aspiration.
2. The lower the social-class level of the student, the more high academic self-concept will tend to elevate his level of educational aspiration.
3. The lower the IQ of the student, the more low academic

self-concept will tend to depress his level of educational aspiration.

4. The lower the IQ of the student, the more high academic self-concept will tend to elevate his level of educational aspiration.
5. The lower the academic achievement of the student, the more low academic self-concept will tend to depress his level of educational aspiration.
6. The lower the academic achievement of the student, the more high academic self-concept will tend to elevate his level of educational aspiration.

On the basis of the several assumptions presented above, it follows that if the impact of the student's perceived teacher-evaluation of ability to do school work on his academic self-concept, and if the impact of academic self-concept on the level of educational aspiration is greater for students characterized by low levels of social class, IQ, and academic achievement than for students at high levels of these categories, then the impact of the perceived teacher-evaluation of ability to do school work on the level of educational aspiration should also be greater at these levels.

The six hypotheses resulting from this logic are as follows:

1. The lower the social-class level of the student, the more the perception of a negative teacher-evaluation of ability to do school work will tend to depress the level of educational aspiration of the student.
2. The lower the social-class level of the student, the more the perception of a positive teacher-evaluation of ability to do school work will tend to elevate the level of educational aspiration of the student.
3. The lower the IQ of the student, the more the perception of a negative teacher-evaluation of ability to do school work will tend to depress the level of educational aspiration of the student.

4. The lower the IQ of the student, the more the perception of a positive teacher-evaluation of ability to do school work will tend to elevate the level of educational aspiration of the student.
5. The lower the academic achievement of the student, the more the perception of a negative teacher-evaluation of ability to do school work will tend to depress the level of educational aspiration of the student.
6. The lower the academic achievement of the student, the more the perception of a positive teacher-evaluation of ability to do school work will tend to elevate the level of educational aspiration of the student.

FINDINGS

To simplify the presentation of the findings, we have used the following abbreviations: for the students' own estimates of their perceived teacher-evaluation of their ability to do school work, SPTEA; for their academic self-concept, ASC; and for their level of educational aspiration, LEA.

The analysis of the data revealed that the following relationships were statistically significant:

- (1) The higher the SPTEA, the higher the ASC.
- (2) The higher the ASC, the higher the LEA.
- (3) The higher the SPTEA, the higher the LEA.

The findings also showed that each of these variables (SPTEA, ASC, and LEA) was also positively and significantly related to three student background variables: social class, IQ, and academic achievement. These findings raised the possibility that the findings reported above might be spurious, that is, that they might be a consequence of the relationship of both the independent and dependent variables to these third or background variables. To explore this possibility, a series

of additional analyses was made, this time holding constant each of the background variables, and the original relationships persisted; therefore, the notion of spuriousness was rejected.

Following the rejection of the possibility of spurious findings, our study design led us to undertake analyses to ascertain the relative intensity of the original relationships for students at different social-class, IQ, and academic achievement levels -- that is, to examine the data in the light of the three sets of six hypotheses each that we have presented above. The results of these analyses are summarized in Table I.

TABLE I
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS OF CONDITIONAL ANALYSES

Findings	Background Levels				
	Social Class	Academic Achievement			IQ
Relationships Significantly Different *	ASC +	→	LEA ↓	ASC +	→
	ASC -	→	LEA ↓	SPTEA +	→
	SPTEA -	→	LEA ↓		
Trends as Predicted *	SPTEA +	→	LEA ↓	SPTEA +	→
	SPTEA -	→	ASC ↓	SPTEA -	→
	SPTEA +	→	ASC ↓		
Trends not as Predicted	ASC -	→	LEA ↓	SPTEA -	→
	SPTEA -	→	LEA ↓	ASC -	→
	SPTEA +	→	LEA ↓	SPTEA +	→

* The lower the background (social-class, academic achievement, IQ level), the stronger the impact of x on y.

ASC - means low academic self-concept.

ASC + means high academic self-concept

SPTEA means the students' perceived teacher-evaluation of ability; signs give direction

LEA means level of educational aspiration; + and - mean high and low, respectively

↓ means elevates

↑ means depresses

An example of how to read Table I is given as follows:
the first finding presented in column one of the table indicates that the lower the social-class level, the greater the impact of high academic self-concept on the level of educational aspiration. The arrow pointing upward following the letters LEA indicates that the impact is to elevate the level of educational aspiration. In all the relationships presented, the trend predicted was an inverse one, that is, that the lower the background variable, the greater the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

Of the three background variables studied in this research, social class seems to have the greatest influence on the impact of SPTEA on ASC, of ASC on LEA, and of SPTEA on LEA. IQ seems to have the least impact, which may be due to the possibility that most students do not know their own IQ's. Academic achievement appears to have an influence that is in between those of social class and IQ. The implications of these findings will be discussed later in this report.

It is interesting to note (see the bottom section of Table I) that four of the five findings in which trends were not as we had predicted dealt with the impact of negative perceived teacher-evaluation and of negative self-concept at different academic achievement and IQ levels. This suggests that negative evaluations have a greater depressing effect at higher than at lower levels of academic achievement and IQ than would be anticipated according to our theoretical expectation. Perhaps this means that atypical evaluations (positive for individuals at low levels and negative for those at high levels) have a greater impact

than typical ones.

Another possible reason for the lack of trends predicted in the case of negative evaluations is that since a majority of students with low background characteristics are not planning to go to college in any case, there is not as much scope for negative evaluations to depress plans as there is for positive evaluations to elevate them; on the other hand, at higher levels where a great majority are planning to go to college, negative evaluations may have more impact (as measured in this study) not because more students heed them, but because a larger proportion of those students have plans that can be depressed (as operationally defined in this study). The validity of this speculation, however, can be determined only by future studies.

If any general conclusion can be stated as a result of this analysis, it is as follows: In general, the less socially or academically advantageous the background characteristics of the high school student, (a) the more likely he is to modify his academic self-concept to accord with what he perceives to be his teacher's evaluation of his ability to do school work; (b) the more likely he is to be influenced in his college plans by his academic self-concept; and (c), the more likely he is to be influenced in his level of educational aspiration by what he believes the teacher thinks about his scholastic ability. This seems especially likely in cases where the perceived evaluation and self-evaluation are positive or supportive in nature.

EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Our findings suggest that there is reason to believe that teachers tend to exert a greater influence on the college plans of working-class students than on those of students at higher social-class levels. However, they do not allow us to make predictions about an individual student. For example, some working-class students undoubtedly are able to resist successfully whatever efforts their teachers make to influence them. Another caution in the use of our findings deserves emphasis. Since they are based on the responses of teachers and students at the eighth and tenth grade levels, they apply only to students at these levels. There are hints in the data (not explored here) that younger children are more subject to the influence of teachers as significant others than older ones, and it may well be that our findings hold for certain adults as well. However, these are questions that can be answered only as the result of further research.

Having cautioned the reader about what implications should not be drawn from our findings, it is now appropriate to explore the possible practical utility of the research.

The findings revealed that the student's perception of his teacher's evaluation of his ability to do school work is positively associated with his academic self-concept. Further, they showed that the lower the social-class of the student, the greater the impact of the academic self-concept on the level of educational aspiration, and in addition, that the lower the academic achievement and IQ of the student, the more a high self-concept tends to elevate the level of educational aspiration of the student.

In considering the practical implications of these findings, we must remember that it is the student's perception of the teacher's evaluation, and not the teacher's evaluation itself, that has been studied. But our data (not presented here in detail) show that the students' perception of the teacher-evaluation is, on the whole, quite accurate. This, however, is not necessarily a fact of which the teacher is aware. It is likely that many teachers are aware neither of the kinds of evaluations concerning students' abilities that they convey to students, nor of the impact that such evaluations have on the college plans of their charges.

Perhaps some of the gestures and remarks that teachers make in their day-to-day dealings with their students are very important in the influence they have on the students' future plans. And it may also be that certain practices which are intended by the teachers to benefit the students may depress the students' aspiration levels. For example, it is likely that teachers who use the strategy of establishing high standards through being "hard markers" in order to "benefit" students can actually produce a long-run effect which is exactly the opposite to that which they intended.

It is not the prerogative of this or any researcher to tell educators that they must raise the aspirations of their students. In fact, some of the guidance literature expresses the view that certain students have educational and occupational aspirations that are unreasonably high, and if this is so, knowing how to depress aspirations may also be important. A social scientist can offer only ideas or

tools to educational policy-makers or to those who implement policies; how to use them is their business. The idea that we wish to offer is that the teacher can have an impact on the aspirations of the students, and that he may not be aware of this fact.

The talent loss problem has long been one of the biggest issues in education. There is an ever-increasing demand for people with a high degree of skill that under our present system of education and training is being developed mainly in people who continue their formal schooling well into adulthood.

Donald Super has stated that although the proportion of students with high IQ in the lower social-class levels is perhaps less than at higher levels, the absolute number of such students is greatest in the lower strata, since the largest part of the student population is found there. There is abundant evidence that, regardless of the classification system used, the proportion of lower-class students with high IQ who do not go on to college is larger than at any other social-class level.

It is interesting to consider Super's statement in the light of two other ideas. First, that as Hollingshead suggested some time ago, there may be a tendency for teachers to underestimate the academic capacities of lower-class students and to overestimate the abilities of upper-class students. Our data indicates that Quebec teachers share this tendency too, and the fact that IQ tests seem to be culture-biased in favour of the higher social classes may facilitate this kind of mis-evaluation. Second, the impact on the student of such estimates (as our research indicates) is probably greatest at lower social-class

levels. If these ideas are correct, it is indeed discouraging that those students who constitute the largest pool of "new" talent are the least likely to be recognized by their teachers. And because of their greater sensitivity to their teachers' evaluations, their academic self-concepts and hence their levels of educational aspiration are most likely to be undermined by these teachers who are most likely to underestimate their ability.

However, the fact that working-class students are more subject to influence than middle or upper-class students has its positive side too. If teachers are made aware of their potential influence on their students' academic self-concepts, and hence on their academic aspirations, they may be in a position to do a great deal to reduce early school leaving. Harriott (Florida State University) has shown that teacher expectations influence the college plans of students, and Brookover and his colleagues provide evidence that through the evaluations they project to their students, teachers can influence their academic performance as well as their levels of educational aspiration. Our research suggests that teachers may have the greatest impact on the aspirations of those students who are at present the greatest unexploited potential source of "new" talent -- those at the lower social-class levels.

Of course, much remains to be learned about the types of teacher-behavior which can be most effective in conveying evaluative impressions to students. With the knowledge now at hand, limited though it is, there is little doubt that practical applications could be made with useful effects by those who train new teachers, by

educational decision-makers who devise curricula and suggest teaching procedures, by those who assign personnel to schools, and of greatest importance, by the teachers themselves. It is sincerely hoped that your efforts on behalf of this research will bring these practical applications into the classrooms of our high schools, to the advantage of us all.

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